

# Festive Regional New Year Celebrations Held



BY HEMARAVIKUMAR

Ugadhi and Vishu – the regional New Year observation of Marathi, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Tamil communities was celebrated in a grand manner at Chinmaya Rameshwaram on April 15. Marking the advent of Spring, the beginning of Creation by Lord Brahma, the movement of the Sun into Mesha, and the wedding of Lord Sundareswara to his consort Meenakshi depending on which part of the country one is from, the regional new year is a time of festive gaiety to be celebrated with feasting and spirit of joy.

The function, attended by Swami Ishwarananda and Acharya Mahadevji, was attended by a capacity crowd who thronged the main auditorium and stayed from start to finish. At center stage was the visually dazzling “Vishu Kani” comprising an array of fruits, and vegetables against a mirror representing infinite abundance in the New Year.

The celebrations began with traditional Devi Pooja and Lalitha Sahasranama fol-



lowed by a colorful cultural program featuring interesting segments from the different regions . The Malayalam group kicked off the evening with a delightful skit outlining the theme of an elderly lady nostalgically reminiscing about Vishu celebrations who is happy to see the old customs still being diligently followed by her relatives in America.

The Tamil group presented a crisp audio visual presentation detailing the richness of Tamil culture and the significant contributions of scientists , philosophers, artistes and saints from the state to the world. This was followed by an original screenplay marrying classical, mythological and modern elements in a humorous vein that delivered a powerful message - to faithfully follow all traditions for the benefit of future generations . The skit elicited much appreciative laughter and applause from kids and adults alike. Both skits featured lively kummi dance as part of the script.

The Marathi group then took the stage to present the solemn assembling of the Gudi – ritual flag and devotional arati with members explaining the importance of the



event. Telugu group presented panchangam reading by Janakiram Kuppa and wonderful poetry by other members. The stage decorations were very creatively arranged as well. Finally the Kannada group convened to sing melodious group songs and presented an enthusiastic well choreographed dance that had everyone’s feet tapping.

Swami Ishwarananda acknowledged and bade farewell to Raj Chidella family, long time volunteers of CM who are moving back to India . Swamiji also acknowledged and distributed mementos to the dedicated group of pooja volunteers who conduct the weekly worship at Rameshwaram. A national integration video emphasizing the unity of all regions regardless of geographical and linguistic differences rounded off the evening’s program.

The entire event was highlighted by rich audio visual presentations and lively commentary put together by emcee for the evening Hema Ravikumar and ended with a sumptuous multi- cultural feast cooked by Mission devotees and volunteers.

# Once Again, Massive Holi Picnic Participation!

The Miles High Regional Park in Fountain Valley, on April 7, was a riot of colors and laughter as just over a 1,000 CMLA members and friends gathered with their families to celebrate Holi. This year was no different from the others in that, this annual picnic hosted by CMLA has become an event that is among the largest in the Indian-American community.

And as each year, volunteers worked tireless hours and executed a day that seemed effortless because of the organizational thought that had gone into it.

Bala Vihar parents early on got together to bag the colors that were to be distributed at the park. Food orders were placed with Subway for veggie sandwiches and Haveli restaurant had a menu of aloo tikki, chole and jalebis. The registration team had a well formulated plan by which people did not have to wait too long in line as they arrived.

The games committee of volunteers had exciting stuff going on from the time people arrived. Sack race, tug-of-war and lemon and spoon among others, had everyone laughingly



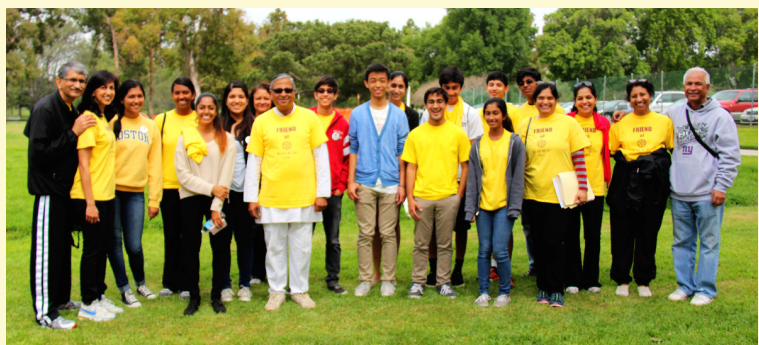
participate, with youngsters finding out the games their parents had engaged in, in India in their youth, while the adults discovered the child in themselves again, joining in the races with fun in mind.

The colors of course was the highlight and everyone engaged with Acharya Mahadevji and with each other in throwing the powders at each other till no one seemed recognizable under the rainbow that covered their faces! Squealing children raced around the park and youth of whom there was a sizeable contingent along with their friends from school and college increased the decibel levels at the park!

After a day of unqualified enjoyment, everyone slowly began to disperse and pleased volunteers returned to the task of cleaning up and returning the park venue to the way it was before a thousand happy people had stormed the area.



# Continuing Enthusiasm for Annual CORD Walk-a-Thon



BY MITRA NAYAK

It was a cool morning on April 7 at Miles Square Regional Park in Fountain Valley, when CMLA volunteers started unloading their cars for the annual CORD USA walk-a-thon. Chinmaya Organization for Rural Development, CORD, is the service wing of Chinmaya Mission that concentrates on serving social and humanitarian needs in local communities and in the Indian subcontinent. The purpose of the walk-a-thon was not only to raise funds but to increase awareness of CORD and its outreach programs.

There was excitement and eager anticipation as the youth volunteers started setting up the registration tables, easels to display the poster boards on CORD, posting the signs and hanging the banner.

There was a true spirit of “yagna” among the volunteers. Acharya Mahadevji recited a small prayer and enthusiastically led the walk. Participants quickly followed carrying their “I love CORD” bags filled with water and granola bars. Over 125 participants of all ages walked for CORD around the .38 mile track.

They stopped to enjoy the three stations around the track. Vidya Venkatesh shared her expertise on Ayurveda and talked about “doshas” and herbal teas. Lali Peruvemba of VYSALA demonstrated yoga asanas, yogic breathing and relaxation techniques. Lastly, there was also a chair massage sponsored by Shila Patel of the NARA Foundation. Participants loved the relaxing neck and shoulder massages! The walk-a-thon allowed the participants to take time to appreciate the holistic approach to

health and fitness.

The finale of the morning was the much anticipated raffle, and the eager crowd gathered together for the drawing of the tickets. The eleven prizes which included gift cards to Barnes N Noble, Disney Store, Yogurtland, and the Kindle Fire HD were generously sponsored by CMLA member, Vijay Raman. Mahadevaji helped draw the winning tickets and the happy winners were announced.

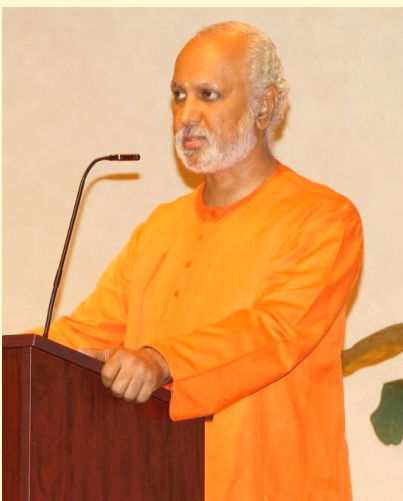
Also, the CMLA youth who will be going on the service trips to CORD Siddhabari and Kaza were introduced. Ten kids from Rameshwaram will be participating in the service trips in July/August. These youth will be the next ambassadors for CORD to continue to bring awareness and increase participation in CORD and its activities.



# To Remember:

Swamiji's monthly and week long lectures on the Valmiki Ramayan continued at Rameshwaram in April. As usual there was knowledge, the practical and the topical that was imparted by him:

- The prosperity of a community is dependent on the number of men of knowledge who live there.
- A weapon may not kill, but it allows the intention to kill.
- The paramatma inside is jnana agni realized with meditation. Agni is the hidden potential in us, just as in dry wood the hidden potential is fire realized with its rubbing.
- When you receive something, receive it with prayer. When you give, give with prayer and good intention.
- Remember Vali represents ego. If you go in front of it, you will be destroyed!



# Celebrating Oneness: Swamiji’s Avatars .....



Jewish...



Buddhist...